



January 20, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
California State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

As officials elected to represent the constituents and local governments of Merced County, we write to express our concerns regarding the healthcare inequities that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought into clear view. As you know, Merced County has one of the lowest physician-to-patient ratios in the state. At the outset of the pandemic, Merced County struggled to increase COVID-19 testing capacity within the County and met barrier after barrier early on trying to acquire rapid testing capabilities and additional PPE.

It now appears that the trend of Merced County being under-resourced is continuing with the State's rollout of vaccine doses. Currently, Merced County has received the second lowest vaccine dose allocation per resident in the state – having received only 12.00 per 1,000 residents.

To make matters worse, 54 percent of the 2,275 doses anticipated for delivery to the Merced County Department of Public Health for the week of January 18 were diverted because of the Moderna Lot 041L20A pause.

The entirety of Merced County is a Healthcare Professional Shortage Area. Although the Department of Public Health has not made public the vaccine allocation formula, it is clear that basing allocation of vaccine on existing healthcare resources will exacerbate historical inequities. In a place where residents wait on long lists to find a local pediatrician for their children, the suggestion that they should be placed at the end of the list for a vaccine for a similar reason is troubling.

Furthermore, it has come to our attention that the California Department of Public Health is aware of a discrepancy between Merced County's vaccine registry, Healthy Futures, from which the State draws data. Our understanding is that the discrepancy between the State's system and between the Healthy Futures is leading to an inadequate allocation for our constituency.

The Merced County Department of Public Health has the capacity to distribute and administer 10,000 doses per week. We have local doctors and other healthcare professionals who have answered the call to help administer the vaccine. We desperately need the doses to do so.

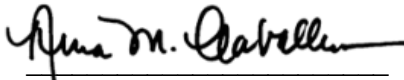
Thousands of Merced County residents have already signed up to receive a vaccine when it becomes available in the county. On their behalf, we respectfully request that you come to their aid and reevaluate how your administration is prioritizing distribution.

All Californians deserve the chance to receive this vaccine. Providing San Diego County with 57.57 doses per 1,000 residents, Santa Clara County with 46.72 doses per 1,000 residents, and Merced County with 12.00 doses per 1,000 residents does not send that message.

Sincerely,



Assemblymember Adam Gray
Twenty-First Assembly District



Senator Anna Caballero
Twelfth Senate District



Representative Jim Costa
Sixteenth Congressional District

cc: Dr. Mark Ghaly, *Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency*
Dr. Tomas Aragon, *Director and State Public Health Officer, California Department of Public Health*